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THE MAKING OF MODERN ITALY*

The recent appearance of three interesting works on different phases of the liberation of Italy shows the perennial interest of mankind in that "one moment of nineteenth-century history when politics assumed something of the character of poetry" (Lecky). Byron, who shared in the initial impulse of Italy's nationalization, was the first to discern that it was "the very poetry of politics." It is perhaps the poetic and moral element in the making of modern Italy that imparts to the story such fascination for women, three of whom have bodied forth the events and personalities of that historic drama with ineffable charm — Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Countess Martinengo Cesaresco, and Jessie White Mario.

Jessie White was born in England in 1832, the year of the great Reform Bill. Her mother was of American origin; her uncle, Thomas Harman, being the owner of a great part of the land upon which New Orleans was built. Assuming the liberal principles of the family, that uncle, in the early twenties, liberated all of his slaves, from humanitarian principles. It was in 1854 that Jessie White travelled to Italy, and spent a few months in the Maison Garibaldi in Nice, where she met the knight-errant of the nineteenth century. Upon her return to England in 1856, she was introduced by Garibaldi's friend and physician to Mazzini. "From the very first interview her fate was decided: she had found her leader, and henceforth, her unswerving allegiance was passionately dedicated to the great Apostle of Unity and Liberty." This devotion never failed, and it explained and excused all that might have been partisan in her judgments. To further the work of Mazzini for the redemption of Italy and the brotherhood of mankind, she devoted herself, body and soul, writing, lecturing, inspiring, and endur-

* *The Birth of Modern Italy*, by Jessie White Mario (J. Fisher Unwin, London); *Garibaldi and the Thousand*, by G. M. Trevelyan (Longmans, Green, & Co., New York); *The Last Days of Papal Rome*, by R. DeCesare (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston).

ing prison and ignominy. In the introduction by Duke Litta Visconti Arese, Jessie White is described as a handsome young woman with magnetic personality, expressive of mental power and goodness. She was married in 1857 to Alberto Mario, an Italian patriot, already surrounded by a romantic halo of mystery, persecution, and heroism.

Mazzini was the true prophet of the nineteenth century. "Beware when the great God lets loose an thinker on this planet." As early as 1834 he wrote: "I believe that this question of nationality was to give its name to the century." Mazzini's philosophy was dynamic, like that of Kant. At the darkest hour of defeat Mazzini declared: "I regarded self as an active force, called upon to transform the medium by which it was surrounded, rather than passively to submit to its influences."

For three hundred years Italy had been a "Helot nation," or, as the sinister Prince Metternich called it, "merely a geographical expression."

It fell to Mazzini's lot to electrify Italy with a new sense of its moral mission. "Great ideas," said he, "must precede great actions." "The real epoch in our life," remarked Emerson, "is a thought by the wayside." It was so with Mazzini. One Sunday in April in 1821, when he was walking home from church with his mother in Genoa, a tall man with an energetic countenance and fiery glance held out a white handkerchief to him, merely saying, "For the refugees of Italy." The man who had taken part in a patriotic insurrection against the despotic king of Sardinia, was now fleeing for his life through Genoa to a far land. That man started in the mind of Mazzini the idea that Italians could and, therefore, ought to struggle for the liberty of their land. From that moment, though he was a mere boy, may be registered his consecration to the idea of Italian nationality.

Ten years later, Mazzini was arrested and thrust into prison, and when his father the next morning came to inquire why the arrest had been made, the police replied, "Your son has a bad habit of thinking too much." Imprisoned in the fortress of Savona, he could see through the bars of his dungeon but two

things — the sea and the sky, the two symbols of the infinite. In that cell, Mazzini matured the structural idea of his life, which was essentially moral. The French and American Revolutions had voiced the rights of man: but Mazzini stressed the Duties of Man. For a nation to be free, its citizens must have a capacity for self-sacrifice, self-control, and thrill with the energy of intelligence and patriotism. He put this message into the phrase, "Life is a mission." Exiled, he began to smuggle back into Italy these ideas, surcharged with moral power. It meant death to have one of Mazzini's pamphlets in one's possession. With the sentence of death resting upon him in his native land, hounded out of France and likewise from Switzerland, he finally, in utter desperation, took refuge in England. There he lived in the direst poverty. On a certain Saturday evening we find him at the pawn shop offering his boots as a means of getting bread for Sunday; but so touched was he by the throng of women and children there in greater need than himself that he actually forgot his own sorrows.

What a contrast did Mazzini and Metternich present! For nearly twenty years, one says, they were the antipodes of European politics. One in his London garret, poor, despised, yet undauntable and sleepless, sending his influence like an electric current through all barriers to revivify the heart of Italy and liberal Europe. The other in his Vienna palace, haughty, famous, equally alert and cunning, with all material and hierarchical powers to maintain him, shedding over Europe his upas doctrines of torpor and decay! Rarely indeed has a period rich in contrasts seen its antagonistic extremes made flesh in two such men.

It was on the bleak shores of the sea of Asov that an Italian seaman learned by whisper of the society of Young Italy, which Mazzini had founded. At once Garibaldi swore allegiance to it. Returning to his native land, he engaged in insurrection; and fleeing for his life, landed at Marseilles to have his initial interview with Mazzini. When Garibaldi opened the morning paper, he saw for the first time his name in print, heading the list of those condemned to death by his own king. Of his years on the plains of South America; of his feats in defending the

Roman Republic; of his famous retreat toward Venice, with the lovely Anita accompanying him, though sick unto death; of the deadly fire of the Austrian fleet, and his lonely flight on foot across the peninsula, and thence exiled on Staten Island, New York, where he made candles for a living — of these things we have not time to speak.

Happy are we in having at last a glowing account from the pen of George Macaulay Trevelyan of Garibaldi's greatest exploit with "The Thousand" in winning for his sovereign the kingdom of Naples with its ten millions of inhabitants. Garibaldi laid the crown at the feet of Victor Emmanuel II, refusing therefor any compensation or title whatever, and returned to his rocky island of Caprera to dig the potatoes which he had planted in the spring.

Everyone knows how in 1870 the keystone of the arch of Italian unity was slipped into place, as a result of the disaster that overtook the French at Sedan. "The Last Days of Papal Rome," 1850-1870, have now been clearly set before the world by R. De Cesare, with an excellent introduction by G. M. Trevelyan.

It is instructive to compare the tasks and personalities of Bismarck and Cavour. Which undertook the harder job? Seemingly, the unification of Germany was the greater task; but the making of modern Italy involved subtler and more perplexing elements. In Bismarck's problem there was no one factor comparable in difficulty to the presence of an international state, such as the Papal Monarchy in the bosom of the nascent kingdom of Italy. The presence of the pope in Rome made Cavour's task unique in baffling conditions. Both statesmen unified and nationalized their states, but Cavour at the same time liberalized Italy, while in Germany the work of liberalization politically is as yet far from complete.

The processes of the two statesmen differ widely. Bismarck wrought out his results by "blood and iron," while Cavour's diplomacy was surcharged with moral energy, and appealed powerfully to the reason and spirit of humanity and progress in all peoples. In making Germany, Bismarck struck down ruthlessly his neighbors to the North, South, and West — Denmark,

Austria, and France. Alsace-Lorraine and the indemnity of a billion dollars have left as a deposit the policy of revenge which accounts for the enormous standing armies and crushing military budgets to-day of France and Germany. Cavour left no rankling wounds in bringing Italy into being, "a state created not by conquest but by consent." No feature of Cavour's work needs to be undone. He set Italy's house in order, advocating free trade and industrial development; he made his country free, united, and independent by begetting a strong regenerative impulse in the masses of the people, a moral impulse that has meant much for humanity.

Over the door of the Reichstag in Berlin there is carved in granite the figure of a defiant lion, with its paws extended upon a ball on which are written the words "Alsace-Lorraine." In this the artist has strikingly set forth one of the initial motives in Bismarck's achievements. Cavour so prophetically co-operated with the moral forces of his age that Modern Italy carries no chip upon its shoulder.

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